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**OPIOID CRISIS' IMPACT ON CHILDREN IN BUCHANAN COUNTY**

**St. Joseph, MO - February 28, 2018** - As recently reported by News-PressNow.com, the opioid crisis in St. Joseph and surrounding areas is having a devastating impact on the safety and health of children. Over the last five years, multiple peer reviews have stated that 79% of our nation's children are in care due to parental substance abuse.

Families impacted by the opioid crisis may not otherwise be associated with child welfare services. Opioid abuse often occurs after an initial physician obtained prescription for a legitimate diagnosis, such as chronic pain or surgery recovery. It is not always introduced to use as a street drug. However, opioid addicts often lose their means of income and ability to support their family, resulting in housing instability, a key factor of children coming into care.

The opioid crisis is putting more pressure on communities than ever before. There is a critical need for foster families to support the more than 400 Missouri children who enter care every month.

**There are 81 Buchanan County children in need of a safe, temporary foster home, but only 25 licensed homes.** The Cornerstones of Care team has three clear goals when supporting a child in care:

1. Place the child in a safe, appropriate and loving home. The team strives to keep children in their community to avoid other disruptions, such as changing schools, but that is only a possibility where there are enough licensed homes in the child's community.
2. Ensure the child has uninterrupted access to healing services, including physical, mental, emotional and social supports.
3. When safe and possible, reunification with the child's biological parent(s).

L.J., a current foster parent, was able to help a child successfully reunify with her biological parents. She says, "Her parents are doing a good job, but it's like, when you foster the child, you foster the family."

Typically, it can take four to six months from the initial call to become fully licensed and have a child in state custody placed in the home. Cornerstones of Care is actively recruiting traditional, medical, elevated needs and treatment foster care families. Individuals, couples and families interested in supporting Buchanan County children by becoming foster parents can call 1-855-SRV-KIDS to learn more and complete the steps necessary prior to the 27-hour STARS training class on April 3, 2018 Wyatt Park Christian Church.

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**About Cornerstones of Care:**

Cornerstones of Care has a long legacy of partnering with children and families to create safe and healthy communities. It serves more than 10,000 children and families through education, mental & behavioral health, foster care & adoption, youth & family support, and community trainings in Kansas, Missouri and beyond. For more information, visit [cornerstonesofcare.org](http://cornerstonesofcare.org).